

***Army Residential Communities Initiative
Draft Finding of No Significant Impact
Fort Detrick, Maryland***

Pursuant to the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] §§ 1500–1508) for implementing the procedural provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (42 United States Code [U.S.C.] 4321 et seq.) and the Army (32 CFR 651, *Environmental Analysis of Army Actions*), Fort Detrick, Maryland, conducted an Environmental Assessment (EA) of the potential environmental and socioeconomic effects associated with implementing a Community Development and Management Plan (CDMP) at Fort Detrick, under the Army’s Residential Communities Initiative (RCI).

Purpose and Need

The purpose of the proposed action is to improve military family housing at Fort Detrick. Many of the housing units on Fort Detrick are substantially below acceptable standards in terms of size, configuration, safety, condition, services, and amenities with respect to contemporary standards of livability and comparable housing in the surrounding community. The military housing has approximately a \$25 million to \$30 million backlog of maintenance and repair, which generally increases each year because of the age of the housing and a shortfall of funding. The proposed action is needed at Fort Detrick to provide affordable, quality housing and ancillary supporting facilities to soldiers and their families. This would be accomplished by improving existing family housing and by addressing the present deficit in the number of available family housing units on the installation.

Proposed Action

The proposed action is privatization and expansion of family housing areas in the northwest portion of Fort Detrick, which entails construction of about 292 new housing units, demolition of about 127 existing units, and revitalization of about 62 existing units, and construction of associated access roads and ancillary facilities.

Consistent with authorities contained in the 1996 Military Housing Privatization Initiative, Fort Detrick, Maryland proposes to transfer responsibility for providing housing and ancillary supporting facilities to GMH Military Housing Fort Detrick, LLC (GMH). Fort Detrick worked jointly with GMH to develop a CDMP to implement the RCI at Fort Detrick.

In accordance with the CDMP, Fort Detrick proposes to convey 190 existing housing units to GMH and provide GMH with a 50-year land lease of about 48 acres. In addition, Fort Detrick would provide a 50-year land lease of about 61 acres of post property on which GMH plans to construct new family housing units and ancillary supporting facilities. Total acreage to be leased would be approximately 109 acres.

Under the CDMP, GMH would increase the on-post-housing inventory by 163 units on Fort Detrick to provide an end state inventory of 354 units. GMH would revise the mix of family housing to better meet current soldier family requirements; address the housing deficit in three- and four-bedroom units; renovate/improve retained units; and provide landscaping improvements, parks, and playgrounds. GMH would construct about 292 new units, demolish about 127 units, and revitalize about 62 existing units on Fort Detrick. New housing construction and existing housing renovation would occur throughout the RCI footprint. Implementation would also require that GMH operate and maintain all family housing for a period of 50 years, as well as construct, operate, and maintain ancillary supporting facilities.

Alternatives Considered

Alternatives to the proposed action that were considered were a partial privatization alternative, a private sector reliance alternative, and leasing alternatives. Those alternatives were considered unreasonable or unfeasible and therefore were not further evaluated. As prescribed by CEQ regulations, the EA also evaluated the no action alternative, which would consist of the Army’s continuing to provide for the family housing needs of its personnel through use of traditional military construction and maintenance funding obtained through the congressional authorization and appropriations process.

Factors Considered in Determining That No Environmental Impact Statement Is Required

The EA, which is attached and incorporated by reference into this Finding of No Significant Impact (FNSI), examined the potential effects of the proposed action and the no action alternative on 12 resource areas and areas of environmental and socioeconomic concern: land use, aesthetics and visual resources, air quality, noise, geology and soils, water resources, biological resources, cultural resources, socioeconomics (including environmental justice and protection of children), transportation, utilities, and hazardous and toxic substances.

Implementation of the proposed action at Fort Detrick would result in a combination of short-term and long-term minor adverse and beneficial effects. There would be short-term minor adverse effects on aesthetic and visual resources, air quality, noise, soils, surface water, groundwater, quality of life, protection of children, and roadways and traffic, primarily associated with construction and renovation activities. Long-term minor adverse effects would occur from the generation of solid waste, also from construction activities. There are also long-term minor adverse effects on land use, aesthetic and visual resources, prime farmland, and biological resources from land use conversion of undeveloped areas to developed areas. Long-term minor adverse effects on surface water, groundwater, and soils could occur from an increase in impervious surfaces, resulting in increased runoff and sediment loads. Long-term beneficial effects would be realized on land use, aesthetic and visual resources, cultural resources, socioeconomics, quality of life, transportation, and utilities from incorporation of modern construction techniques and smart growth principles into the neighborhood design. Long-term beneficial effects would also occur from afforestation of previously open areas.

The cumulative effects from implementing the proposed action would produce short-term adverse effects on air quality, noise, and roadways and traffic from concurrent construction activities taking place on Fort Detrick.

Mitigation actions at Fort Detrick pertain to landscaping materials, planting of tree buffers for aesthetic and noise mitigation, air quality mitigation, energy conservation, soils and surface waters protection, afforestation, preservation of archeological resources potentially discoverable during site preparations, protection of children, and control of hazardous and toxic substances during construction. Mitigation measures included in the CDMP are enforceable as essential elements of the contract defining the parties' obligations for carrying out Fort Detrick's RCI project.

Conclusion

Based on the EA, it has been determined that implementation of the proposed action will have no significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts on the quality of the natural or human environment. Because no significant environmental impacts will result from implementation of the proposed action, an Environmental Impact Statement is not required and will not be prepared.

Public Comment

The EA and Draft FNSI are available for review and comment for 30 days, beginning October 31, 2003, through November 30, 2003. Copies of the EA and Draft FNSI can be obtained by contacting Headquarters, USA, MRMC, ATTN: MCMR-PA (Charles Dasey), 504 Scott Street, Fort Detrick, MD 21702-5012; by e-mail request to chuck.dasey@det.amedd.army.mil; or by phone to (301)619-2736. Copies have also been provided to the Fort Detrick Post Library and the Frederick County Public Library, Frederick, Maryland. The EA is also available for download at <http://www.detrack.army.mil/detrack/usag/ipo/em/index.cfm?page=4>. Comments on the EA and Draft FNSI should be submitted to the Fort Detrick Public Affairs Office at the physical address or e-mail address given above by no later than November 30, 2003.

Date: _____

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